



LA River ExpeditionS

October 17, 2011

Sen. Pavley,

As one of the creators of the Paddle the LA River program, a co-writer of FoLAR's Access & Use Recommendations, and the leader of the 2008 LA River Expedition (in which played a key role in winning Clean Water Act protections), here are just a few of my comments and suggestions for the public record re: your ongoing work on behalf of the Los Angeles River:

* Access Seasons. We are not serving our youth due to overly severe access restrictions. If we restrict river usage to a very broad definition of the "dry season," (i.e., Oct - May) then we will lose the ability of generations of youth to use their own river during the school year. It's also an outdated policy that creates a false sense of security. Support FoLAR's recommendation to get rid of it altogether, in favor of a better preemptive system with sufficient warnings and better public education programs to support this new policy.

* Urban Parks. Related to this first item is our need to stop depriving our youth of their natural resources. Working toward utilizing our untapped park space (i.e., unused prime LA River areas such as the Basin and the Glendale Narrows) constitutes one of the best bang-for-the-buck actions that will, essentially, gain the city much-needed urban park and recreational space. While improving our safety aspects, we need to embrace our river and its parks, not be afraid of them.

* Garbage Filters. We need to complete the storm drain catch basin projects (at the street level) for all sources that lead into the LA River. Without that, clean up efforts (i.e., FoLAR, Heal the Bay, new initiatives by LA River Expeditions, etc.) are largely in vain, as the next rain puts all the trash back in the trees, bushes, etc. Speed that forward until we're at 100% by May 2012. Only then will we begin to see the dramatic, lasting transformation of the river that we all seek.

* Wasted Volunteerism. We need to do a better job of harnessing public volunteerism. If we generally remove restrictions on access (while getting to the

actual safety issues), then we can begin the process of rallying the armies of volunteers and truly cleaning up places like the Sepulveda Basin. The Paddle the River program created a groundswell of motivated people who wanted to be put to use, but we were not able to harness that because we could not authorize them to go and help clean up their own river because of overly severe permitting and use restrictions. Also, LA County runs an Adopt-the-Riverbank program, but I don't believe it's particularly well known and seems to be under-utilized. The people who have been able to use it, however, seem to have done well by it. At this point, there's no excuse for every segment of the river not being adopted, cared for and advocated for by local residents who live closest to that area of the adopted stretch. We need the whole river adopted in this way by June 2012.

* Paddle the LA River. Naturally, we'd like to see this expanded next season — and even minimally funded — for the benefit of all program partners to serve larger #s of the public. For the demand that we already have, we should be serving about 3,000-5,000 people per year (the pilot program was limited to just 280). LA River Expeditions, even before the pilot program began, had 1,200 people who had indicated that they wanted to go on guided trips. And in July, registration for the Paddle the LA River program yielded more than 2,000 people who showed up online at 7am on a Tuesday morning to purchase tickets (90% had to be turned away). Again, for all the good attention that we've brought to the river this past summer through our efforts, this program constitutes another fantastic bang-for-the-buck solution. Give us a chance to do what we'd like to do and we'll pay back benefits to the community tenfold.

Regards,

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President & Founder

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